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The Press and the Cold War

By James Aronson.

303 pp. Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company. \$8.

The Politics of Fear

Joseph R. McCarthy and the Senate.

By Robert Griffith.

362 pp. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky. \$8.50.

The Politics of Loyalty

The White House and the Communist Issue, 1946-1952.

By Alan D. Harper.

318 pp. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Corp. \$13.

The Yalta Myths

An Issue in U. S. Politics, 1945-1955.

By Athan G. Theoharis.

263 pp. Columbia: University of Missouri Press. \$10.

By ALLEN WEINSTEIN

"It was a time of evil," Dalton Trumbo reminisced during a recent speech on the McCarthy era, "and no one on either side who survived it came through untouched by evil . . . it will do no good to search for villains or heroes or saints or devils because there were none; there were only victims. . . . That is why none of us—right, left, or center—emerged from that long nightmare without sin." Trumbo, one of the "Hollywood Ten," spoke on behalf of those like himself who were victimized by the movie industry's anti-Communist blacklist, but his remarks apply to all those Americans a generation ago who lost jobs, were summoned before Congressional committees, sent to jail or harassed publicly for their present or former radical associations.

With Richard Nixon in the White House and J. Edgar Hoover still gumshoeing for subversives, it would be premature even today to ring down the curtain on that frantic earlier era of cold war anti-Communism. But if the domestic Red-hunt has not yet passed into history, it decidedly has passed into the hands of historians, particularly a growing school of disaffected younger scholars. These historians, products of the cold war themselves, reject the basic premises of American anti-Communist ideology, whether of the conservative or liberal variety. Unlike Trumbo, they continue "to search for villains or heroes or saints or devils" in post-war American society.

The proponents of this world-view, which historians generally term "revisionism," argue that Roosevelt's statesmanlike efforts at Yalta to establish a post-war *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union were deliberately sabotaged by his successor. Truman then, or so the argument goes, willingly presided over creation of an aggressively anti-Communist United States, both in foreign policy

Mr. Weinstein, associate professor of history at Smith, is writing a book on the problem of subversion in recent American history.

and in internal security matters. Democrats and Republicans, Tweedledee and Tweedledum, proceeded to drag the country into a needless confrontation with the Soviet Union, partly because of pressures from the military-industrial interests but also because of a national anti-Communist neurosis.

A mindless search for subversives at home was inevitable, according to revisionist causality, once the United States Government had unleashed the cold war abroad. Both parties competed in the spy-hunt fantasy; Republicans in order to rouse voters against the Truman Administration, Democrats in order to gain support for Truman's anti-Soviet foreign programs. The long nightmare of witch-hunting, again according to this analysis, was a natural byproduct of America's global aggressiveness.

Most cold war revisionists have

concentrated on American foreign policy, but some younger scholars holding this perspective have begun examining the domestic cold war, largely in order to apportion blame for such developments as the Truman loyalty program, Congressional Red-baiting, the rise and fall of Joe McCarthy, and the role of American journalism in the cold war. Three of the works under review gulp down generous helpings of the revisionist argument while the fourth hardly recognizes that there exists an argument to swallow. Each of the three revisionist studies, like others of their kind, face the difficulty Trumbo alludes to; they attempt to explain the recent past before having forgiven it.

One of the writers in question, James Aronson, continues to wage the battles of that past. Aronson, an unreconstructed old left newspaperman and former editor of the *National Guardian*, assails the American press for complicity in the cold war. His myopic assertion that the entire press has avoided "basic criticism of national policies" and that the entire fourth estate has become "a voluntary arm of established power" will come as a revelation both to working newsmen and to the Vice President.

Aronson offers himself as a somewhat battered Ishmael, shipwrecked during the McCarthy era's political storms but now returned to tell the tale. He appears to believe that during that period, to which he devotes half his book, almost all American newspapers but the *National Guardian* either suppressed or distorted the "news."

P-Weinstein, Allen
P-Aronson, James
P-Griffith, Robert

P-Harper, Alan D.

P-Theoharis, Athan G.

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